

# *HARSH PARENTING AS A PREDICTOR OF PHYSICAL, VERBAL, AND RELATIONAL AGGRESSION IN CHILDREN*

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Russell Jackson

Iowa State University

15 April 2014

# RESEARCH QUESTION

Does the type of abuse children experience impact the type of aggression they develop or portray?



# WHERE THIS QUESTION COMES FROM

- Harsh parenting is positively correlated with child aggression.
- Little attention given to examining potential relationship between abuse and specific types of child aggression.
- Result is an important gap in the current literature.



# PREVIOUS RESEARCH

- Harsh Parenting/Abuse and Child Aggression
    - ❑ Aucoin, Frick, and Bodin (2006)
    - ❑ Chang, et al. (2003)
  
  - Media Violence/Aggression and Child Aggression
    - ❑ Coyne, et el. (2008)
    - ❑ Anderson, Gentile, and Buckley (2007)
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# PREVIOUS RESEARCH

## Conclusions?

- The current research is still somewhat mixed on the topic.
  - Does abuse, aggression, or violence have a modality-specific effect on child aggression, or are the effects generalized to all types of aggression?
  - Evidence exists that support both arguments.
  - Most studies contributing to the argument examine the effects of abuse or aggression or violence within the realm of media and subsequent child aggression.
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# PURPOSE OF THE CURRENT STUDY

- Study of real-life abuse and aggression experience vs. violent media effects.
- Help fill the literature gap.

## HYPOTHESIS

*If the type of harsh abuse is modality-specific in its impact on a child's own type of aggression, then physical abuse (hitting, slapping) against that child would most strongly predict child physical aggression, and not so strongly (if at all) predict that child's verbal or relational aggression.*

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# METHOD

- Participants were 307 ISU undergraduate students in psychology courses.
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- Recruited via the SONA participant pool.
- Participants were given credit in psychology courses for participating.
- Study was conducted via an online survey.

*Table 1. Sample characteristics.*

<i>N</i>	Age ( <i>M</i> )	Age ( <i>SD</i> )	% Male
307	19.4	1.77	27.4

# METHOD

## Measures:

- **Abusive Parenting** – measured using 2 items from the Brief Risk Factor Scale (adapted from Satcher, 2001)

“Has one of your parents or step-parents slapped you?” (Never, 1-2 times, 3-4 times, 5-6 times, 7 times or more)

“Has one of your parents or step-parents hit you?” (Never, 1-2 times, 3-4 times, 5-6 times, 7 times or more)

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# METHOD

## Measures:

- **Aggressive Behavior** (BPAQ; Buss & Perry, 1992) - modified version that measures physical, verbal and relational aggression

## Example Questions

"If somebody hits me, I hit back."

" I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me."

"I sometimes spread rumors that may hurt someone."

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# METHOD

## Measures:

- **Demographic Information** – gender, age, parental income



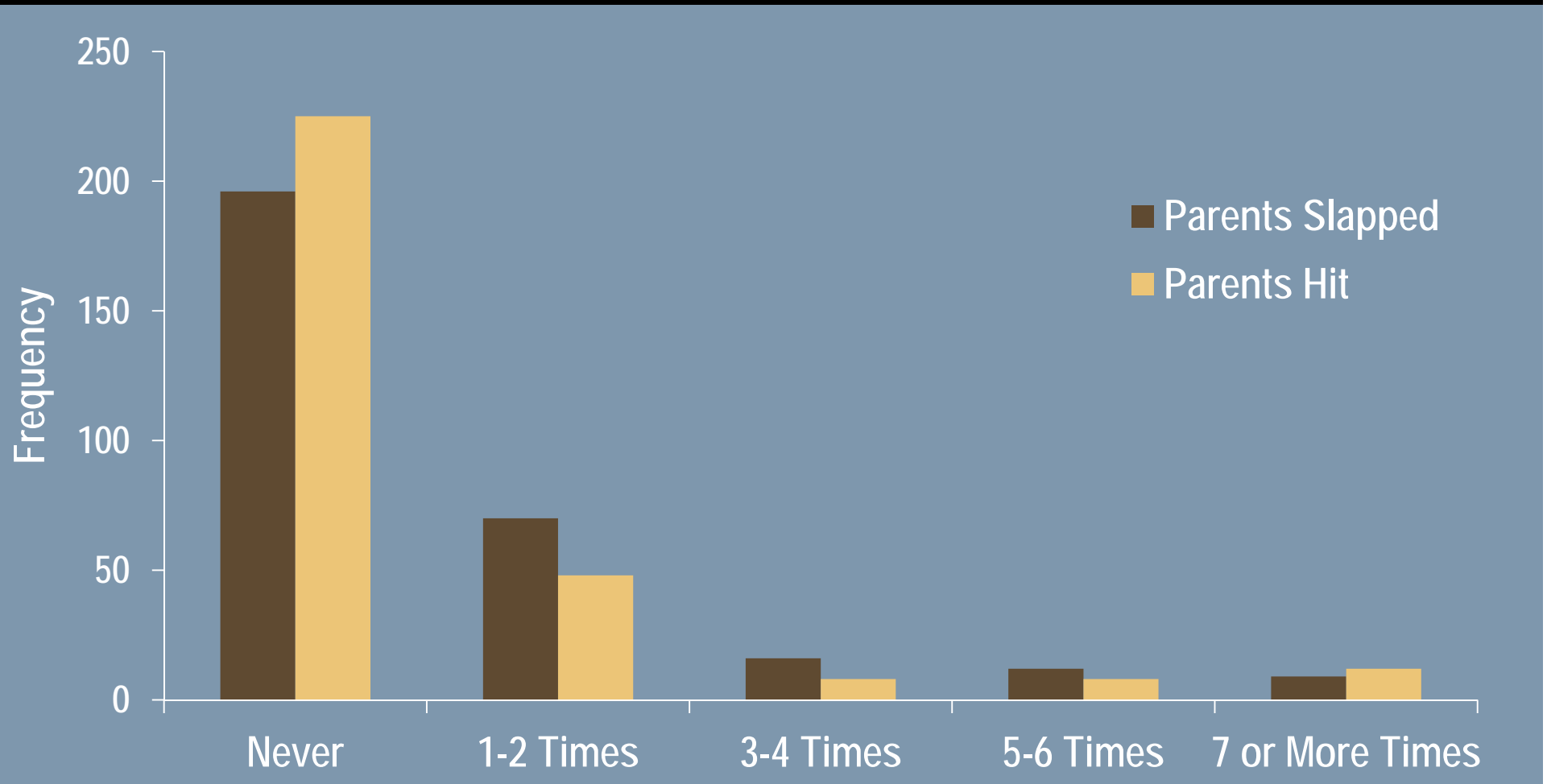
# RESULTS

*Table 2.* Descriptive statistics and reliability indices for the scales of interest.

	Scale	Number of Items	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>
1.	Abusive Parenting	2	1 – 10	3.00	1.77	0.81
2.	Physical Aggression	7	1 – 7	2.40	1.08	0.83
3.	Verbal Aggression	6	1 – 7	3.23	1.21	0.84
4.	Relational Aggression	8	1 – 7	2.69	0.88	0.76

# RESULTS

*Figure 1.* Frequency of participant responses to the physical abuse question.



# RESULTS

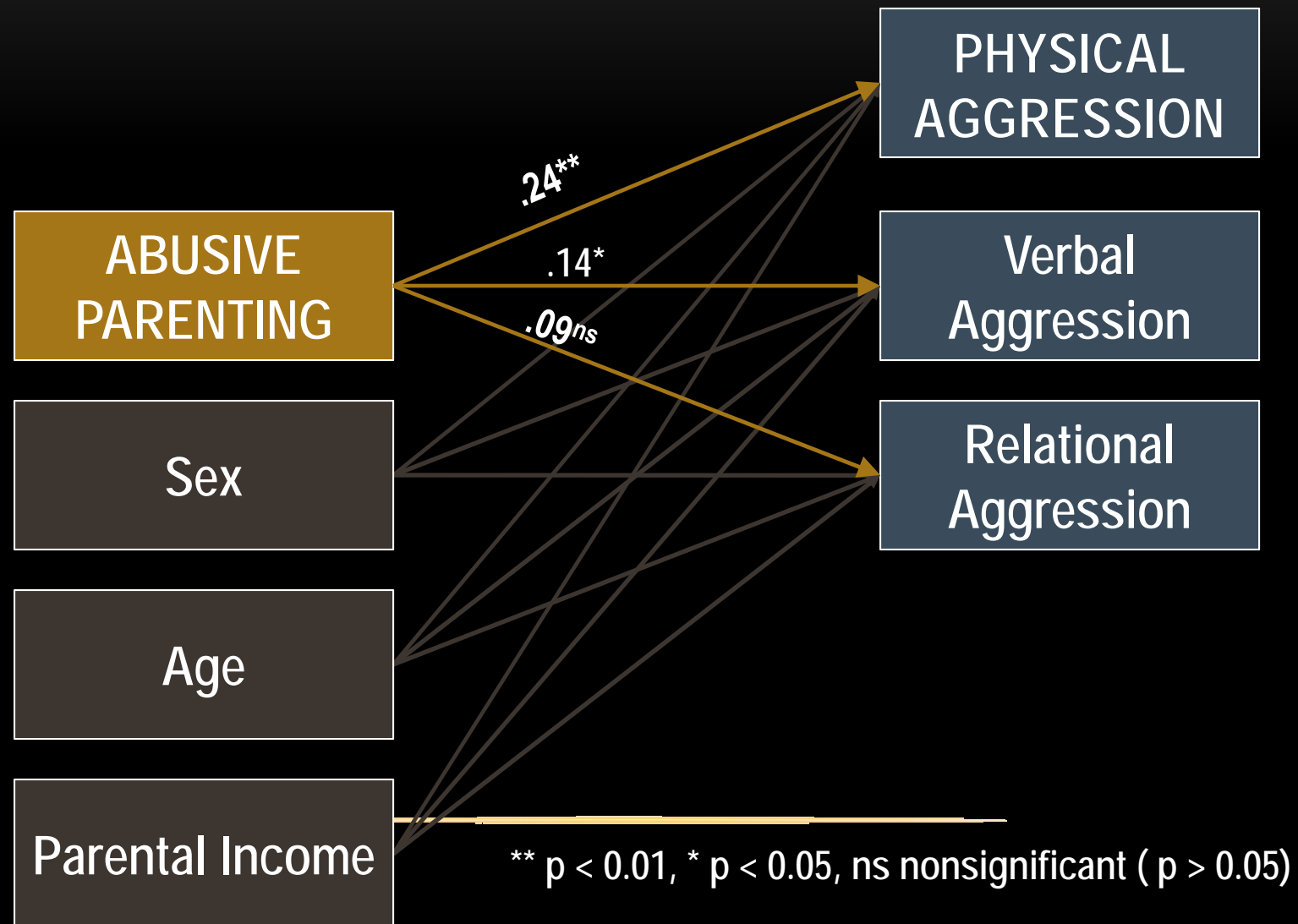
*Table 3.* Bivariate Correlations Between Variables.

		Total sample ( <i>N</i> = 307)			
		1	2	3	4
1.	Abusive parenting	-----			
2.	Physical aggression	.29**	-----		
3.	Verbal aggression	.21**	0.35**	-----	
4.	Relational aggression	.088	.37**	.48**	-----

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$

# RESULTS

*Figure 2. Predictive Strength of Abusive Parenting on Aggression Types*



# DISCUSSION

- The results support the initial hypothesis.
- The results indicate that child aggression is at least somewhat reliant on the type of parental abuse a child experiences.
- The results help fill in the gap currently in the literature regarding the debate over generalized vs. modality-specific effects of observed or experienced abuse, aggression, violence.



# DISCUSSION

## Explanations for the Results

- Many theories could explain what was found.
    - ❑ The General Aggression Model (Anderson & Bushman, 2002)
    - ❑ Script Theory (Huesmann, 1986)
    - ❑ Social Interaction Theory (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994)
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# DISCUSSION

## Explanations for the Results

- Most fitting model to explain the results.
    - ❑ Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977)
    - ❑ Children who experience physical abuse or other physical harsh parenting practices may adopt physical aggression through modeling.
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# DISCUSSION

So What?

- Real-life applications of the findings



# DISCUSSION

## Limitations

- Sample homogeneity.

## Implications for Future Studies

- Seek to include more diverse samples to obtain more descriptive results and increase generalizability.



# DISCUSSION

## Limitations

- Only examined relationship of physical abuse and child aggression.

## Implications for Future Studies

- Design studies encompassing multiple types of parental abuse and aggression (e.g. verbal abuse and relational aggression as well as physical abuse) to see if modality-specific effects are found with various types of abusive behaviors and their respective types of child aggression.
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# DISCUSSION

## Limitations

- No control for multiple and simultaneous abuse situations.

## Implications for Future Studies

- Design a study where the potential effects of multiple, concurrent forms of abuse can be accounted for.
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# DISCUSSION

## Limitations

- No causal relationship or directionality of effects possible with study design.

## Implications for Future Studies

- Longitudinal studies should be done such that it would be possible to test which path is stronger: (1) socialization effects (children learn aggression by observing abusive parents) or (2) aggressive children elicit abusive parenting practices.
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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

➤ Dr. Craig Anderson

➤ Sara Prot



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